
A Poet's Perspective: The Beauty of Life Reflected in Boris Pasternak's Later Works

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the relationship between Boris Pasternak's life and his artistic expression through his later poems. Following Wellek & Warren's (1954) qualitative biographical analysis of Pasternak, which is basically associated with the qualitative method, we examined his personal narrative that contributed to the formation of his poetic voice. Data were taken from Pasternak's later poems, namely «When It Clears Up» (1956-1959)–to Pasternak's life stories, mainly taken from Pasternak's biography by Hingley (2021) and the compilations of his letters to his family and friends (Slater, 2010). This study revealed that the events in his life greatly influenced his creation because they became the key motif of his narrative. The deaths of his brother and sister were influential in his studies of mortality and death, including grief. Peredelkino was a small village, and his longer period of stay helped him to have a chance to escape into nature and to experience loneliness to the greatest extent. In addition, his poetic work carries on the features left by his teachers Alexander Skryabin and Hermann Cohen. To make up for the criticism of Belyi, whom he met in the summer of 1911, Skryabin offered Pasternak the aesthetic ideals of the latter work, developing the principles of poetry. Thus, in addition to recommending for Pasternak's literary reading material other authors' opinions on various philosophical issues, Cohen's philosophic teaching enriched Pasternak's outlook on the world and launched the latter on his poetic path. Understanding the specifics of Pasternak's late poems provides knowledge of his life shots and the interconnectedness between his experiences and creation. The novelty of this study is reflected in the integration of a biographical analysis with a poetic interpretation. Such an approach uniquely combines the qualitative biographical analysis with a close reading of Pasternak's later poems.

Keywords: *Alexander Skryabin; biographical analysis; Boris Pasternak; Hermann Cohen; poetry motif*

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of Russia, writers have come and gone, etching their names in the minds and culture

of the Russian people. As time passed, many themes and genres developed as a response to different

societal contexts and historical events occurring in Russia. In the 18th century, for example, odes were very popular, with Mikhail Lomonosov as its primary influencer (Wachtel, 2004). In the 20th century, the prevalent literary ideology was Socialist Realism. However, Boris Pasternak defied it and chose his path (Kara-Murza, 2020).

Pasternak was a highly prominent Russian lyrical poet who lived during Stalin's reign. He wrote poems celebrating life and freedom. There is a significant aspect to this contradiction, as even though Pasternak lived during Stalin's reign, his literary career was rarely influenced by the literary ideology pervasive at the time. Joseph Stalin's rise to power was marked by the rise of Socialist Realism, a genre of literature focused on the idealized representation of life under Socialism. Instead of following the literary doctrine, Pasternak chose to dwell on the life and freedom of an individual, a Western-oriented value at the time. This shift of value was observed and harshly criticized by his fellow writers at the time. The reason that the poems in this research were published quite late in his life was that Pasternak was effectively boycotted in the Soviet literary circle. The condition occurred due to a non-conforming stance towards the Socialist Realism ideology and its penchant for using the suffering of the masses as a political and ideological tool (Bykova, 2020).

The deviation in value could be traced back to the influence of Alexander Skryabin, himself an important and controversial Soviet composer-pianist, in Pasternak's formative years. As Skryabin was a close friend of Pasternak's father, Leonid Pasternak (Hughes, 2015), he had a significant impact on the young poet's artistic development. Skryabin's innovative and avant-garde approach to music, which often pushed the boundaries of traditional harmony and tonality, likely inspired Pasternak to experiment with language and form in his writing. Furthermore, Skryabin's emphasis on the spiritual and mystical aspects of art may have influenced Pasternak's exploration of themes such as love, nature, and the human condition in his poetry. By examining the relationship between Skryabin and Pasternak, it is possible to obtain a deeper understanding of the cultural and artistic currents that shaped Pasternak's unique style and vision.

In his youth, in addition to his musical studies, Boris Pasternak developed a deep engagement with

philosophy, though his relationship with the discipline was marked by complexity. He studied under the renowned German philosopher Hermann Cohen, with a particular interest in epistemology. However, Pasternak himself admitted that philosophy, which he regarded as a rigorous intellectual exercise, stood in conflict with his passion for poetry, a pursuit he saw as a more intuitive and creative endeavor. Despite excelling in Cohen's philosophy courses, Pasternak found little personal joy in the prospect of becoming a philosopher, then deciding to abandon philosophy as a lifelong vocation.

Although this decision might suggest that Pasternak distanced himself entirely from philosophy, the discipline continued to inform and shape his poetic work. His exposure to Kantian philosophy through Cohen, particularly the distinction between the transcendental and the phenomenal, profoundly influenced his worldview. Pasternak often separated the essential qualities of objects from the human-imposed forms and functions, reconstructing them as abstract entities in his poetry. Additionally, Pasternak disagreed with Kant's focus on the transcendental as a superior, ideal realm. Instead, he emphasized the equal footing of natural objects and abstract qualities in his poems, often minimizing the role of the subjective "I" in favor of placing multiple poetic objects on an equal plane (Podoroga, 2015). Thus, while Pasternak may have renounced philosophy as a career, its principles continued to serve as the structural framework for much of his poetic thought and expression. Understanding Pasternak's critical evaluation of philosophy leads to the examination that Pasternak's poems can be seen as impersonal. They are impersonal, not in the sense that his poems are purely objective but in the understanding that Pasternak blended his ego to the world that he wrote in lieu of asserting the existence of a transcendent "self" that often shows itself in other poets' poems in this time (as seen by the absence and/or the powerlessness of the subject "I" in many of Pasternak's poems) (Baróthy, 2015).

Pasternak's career as a poet had begun before World War I. Symbolism and lyric poems were his forte. Yet, his stance toward poetry was not echoed by his fellow poets at the time. Refusing to conform to Socialist Realism and the theme of proletarian struggle, Pasternak struggled to publish a single book from 1936 to 1943. Nevertheless, Pasternak kept producing

translations of classic English, German, and French poetry into Russian. Meanwhile, in the same period, also writing poems about his love and awe of nature (Bykova, 2020).

Several studies and books are discerned to support the thesis of this research, classified into two major categories: studies that explored Pasternak's literary works and studies that explored Pasternak's life. On the side of literary works research, several authors like Hughes (2015), Yelovskaya & Sidiakova (2014), and Plank (2015) contributed to the discourse. Hughes (2015) offered an investigation of the themes and underlying philosophies in Boris Pasternak's poetry at different stages of his life. According to Hughes, Pasternak's works had common themes throughout his life, such as the appreciation of life and the nobility of self-sacrifice. Furthermore, Hughes underlined that Pasternak rejected fame and poetry as a means of political message throughout his life. Another study was conducted by (Plank, 2015) who explored the sound and imagery in Pasternak's lyric poetry. The book investigated how Pasternak engages both auditory and visual elements to enhance emotional feeling through his work.

Other research by Harrington (2016), Bykova (2020), and Hingley (2021), examined the life story of Boris Pasternak. These studies explored Pasternak's life, from his early years to his later successes and conflicts with the Soviet regime. For example, Hingley focused on the impact of Pasternak on Russian philosophical insights. His study also emphasizes Pasternak's intellectual contributions to Russian literature. Bykova outlined Pasternak's life from his younger until his elder years and his passing, and the circumstances surrounding those times.

This study employed a text-oriented approach, following Wellek and Warren's (1954) qualitative biographical analysis of Pasternak's later poems. The analysis was undertaken by reading the poems intensively to discern their elements and compare them to Pasternak's life journey. Furthermore, a deeper exploration was conducted to uncover the nuances in Pasternak's artistic and philosophical reflections.

Based on the previous studies, there is a gap in Pasternak's study: the lack of deep reading in the relationship between Pasternak's life story and poetry, particularly his late poems. Therefore, this article investigates Pasternak's late poems to scrutinize how

his later years of life influenced the production of his poems. The novelty of this research lies in its object, as Pasternak's late poetries are less discussed than his masterpiece, *Doctor Zhivago*, yet were also very influential in the Soviet literary tradition. The poems in *Doctor Zhivago* are also present in this research owing to the novel being an autobiography or semi-autobiography according to many Pasternak scholars (Sendich, 1994). Thus, it is a viable secondary source for a biographical study.

The theoretical framework used in this study is based on the biographical analysis proposed by Wellek and Warren (1954), which addresses how Pasternak's life influenced his poetry production, themes, and imagery. The biographical method of analysis is one of the most well-established forms of literary inquiry, and it is a viable source of literary analysis as a biography can shed light on how an author's life influences their creativity. It is also a form of historiography; therefore, it records the life and growth of an author. Understanding what happened in an author's life can help analyze the literary works produced afterward. This approach especially works for writers who are greatly known by the general public and have a plethora of records, especially in the form of autobiography, written letters, or written and spoken records (and audiovisual records in modern times). From this perspective, Pasternak is an author with sources aplenty. He was greatly revered in his times; wrote letters to his friends and family; and had biographies written about him, some near his passing and others in the present time.

This study compares several of Pasternak's late poems—mainly taken from Pasternak's last poetry collection, «Когда разгуляется» “When It Clears Up” (1956-1959)—to Pasternak's life stories, mainly taken from Pasternak's biography by Hingley (2021) and the compilations of his letters to his family and friends (Slater, 2010). By applying Wellek & Warren's framework, this study seeks to reveal how Boris Pasternak's personal experiences shaped his poems' themes, imagery, stylistic choices, and metaphors.

The biographical analysis of Boris Pasternak's life and its influence on his poetry considers several steps. The first step is a systematic selection of Pasternak's late poems from his collection “When It Clears Up” (1956-1959) for analysis. We decided to choose this part of his collection because it typically represents his philosophical and political stances.

Afterward, we identified relevant biographical sources, including Pasternak's biography by Hingley (2021) and compilations of his letters to family and friends (Slater, 2010). This step was intended to gather credible and reliable information about Pasternak's life, experiences, and relationships. These sources are the foundation for understanding the biographical context that influenced his poetry.

In the second step, we gathered and organized data from the selected biographical sources, focusing on key life events, experiences, and relationships that may have influenced Pasternak's poetry. In this step, we created a timeline of Pasternak's life, highlighting significant events and periods that correspond to the composition of his late poems. In the third step, we conducted a close reading of the selected poems, identifying recurring themes, imagery, stylistic choices, and metaphors to analyze the poems' structures, language, and tone to understand their literary and artistic significance. In the fourth step, we applied Wellek & Warren's (1954) framework to analyze the relationship between Pasternak's life experiences and his poetry and to examine how specific life events, relationships, and experiences influenced the themes, imagery, and stylistic choices in his poems.

In the fifth step, we cross-referenced the biographical data with the poetic analysis to identify patterns and connections between Pasternak's life and his art. We compared the themes, imagery, and stylistic choices in the poems with the corresponding life events and experiences to understand their interplay. In the sixth step, we interpreted the findings, synthesizing the biographical and poetic analysis to understand how Pasternak's life influenced his poetry. In the last step, we identified key insights and patterns that emerged from the analysis, highlighting the significance of specific life events and experiences on his artistic expression.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Pasternak was often exposed to loss and death, most crucially the death of his mother and father around World War II. Throughout the latter part of his life, therefore, Pasternak often wrote a theme that was explored very deeply in his poems: appreciation for life. A branch of this theme was the appreciation for the ephemerality and the ever-changing state of life, frequently manifested in Pasternak's poems either

as literal movements in daily life or as the change of weather and/or seasons (Prikhoda, 2023).

«Снег идет» "It is snowing" (1957), for example, movement is shown not only in the text itself but also in its title. The lyric «Потому что жизнь не ждет» "Because life does not wait ..." embodies the motif of constant movement. Pasternak's heroes are restless, impossible, unable, and unwilling to stop; they wade through life's worries, fuss, and the business of everyday people:

*Мне к людям хочется, в толпу,
В их утреннее оживление.*

(Пастернак, 2017: 1245)

I want to people, to the crowd,
in their morning animation.

(Pasternak, 2017: 1245)

In the poetic texts of the poet, life is transformed with movement:

*И я по лестнице бегу,
Как будто выхожу впервые
На эти улицы в снегу
И вымершие мостовые.*

*Везде встают, огни, уют,
Пьют чай, торопятся к трамваям.
В течение нескольких минут
Вид города неузнаваем.*

(Пастернак, 2017: 1245)

And I'm running up the stairs
It's like I'm going out for the first time
To these streets in the snow
And dead pavements.

Everywhere they get up, lights, comfort,
They drink tea, hurry to the trams.
Within minutes
The view of the city is unrecognizable.

(Pasternak, 2017: 1245)

In the poetry collection «Когда разгуляется» "When It Clears Up", not only does «Снег идет» "It is snowing" show the motif of movement, it also shows the motif of looking forward and embracing the future:

*Не оглянешься — и святки.
Только промежутки краткий,
Смотришь, там и новый год.*

(Пастернак, 2017: 349)

Do not look back - and Christmas time.
Only a short interval
Look, there is a new year.

(Pasternak, 2017: 349)

The theme of life continued in the poem «Музыка» “Music”. In addition to the exploration of the theme of life, this poem was also concerned with the theme of creativity. In contrast to his other poems in the same collection, Pasternak relied upon abstract concepts and things rather than on mundanity. In the second stanza, Pasternak articulates his belief that the ultimate goal of creative expression is to surrender oneself (Цель творчества — самоотдача), implying that true artistry requires a willingness to sacrifice one’s ego and desires for the sake of the creative work. The latter forms a couple with life and manifests itself as a satellite:

*Но надо жить без самозванства
Так жить, чтобы в конце концов
Привлечь к себе любовь пространства...*

(Пастернак, 2017: 349)

But you have to live without imposture
So live so that in the end
Attract the love of space...

(Pasternak, 2017: 349)

The concept of “creativity” in Pasternak’s lyrics is inextricably linked with the phenomenon of life. Therefore, it can also be referred to in the context of life. In the poem «Август» “August” (1953), which can be called the final of the poet’s work, Pasternak refers to the most significant constants of his path: life, creativity, faith, and love. However, it is with thoughts about creativity that he ends the work:

*Прощай, размах крыла расправленный...
И образ мира в слове явленный,
И творчество, и чудотворство.*

(Пастернак, 2017)

Farewell, spread wingspan...
And the image of the world in the word revealed,
And creativity, and wonderworking.

(Pasternak, 2017)

On the one hand, the poet compares the last two nouns, naming each of them separately. Life for a poet is a miracle to some extent. On the other hand, Pasternak equates miracle-working with the creation of poetic works that are born through words. It is no coincidence that the lyrical hero says goodbye to the image of the world, which manifests itself in poetry. Thus, creativity is a component of miracle-working.

«Август» “August” consists of twelve stanzas, many of which have become widely quoted over time. The main motive of the work is a dream in which the lyrical hero sees his funeral. The action of the work itself consists of several successive events: sleep, tears, and awakening.

Awakened by the rays of the sun, the lyrical hero notices a pillow wet with tears. He recalls that Orthodoxy celebrates on this day the great feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord. When Jesus Christ was praying on Mount Tabor in Galilee, his face suddenly lit up with the light of Divine majesty, and all the students saw it.

The originality of the poetic text of «Август» “August” is associated with the plot, composition, and figurative system of the poem. Speaking about the plot, it is appropriate to highlight three places that are important for understanding the work and coexist in the poem in parallel. The first is in which the lyrical hero wakes up in his room and realizes that he dreamed of his funeral. The second place is where death stands in the middle of the graveyard and looks into the face of the deceased. The third place is amorphous, referring the reader to biblical places and events:

*Обыкновенно свет без пламени
Исходит в этот день с Фавора*

(Пастернак, 2017)

Ordinarily light without flame
Comes on this day from Tabor

(Pasternak, 2017)

Pasternak’s admiration of life was shown

even further in the naming of *Doctor Zhivago's* main character, Yuri Zhivago. Zhivago is the genitive and accusative form of an adjective in Old Church Slavonic. The word "Zhivago", is an inflexion of the word «живой» or "live". The character Zhivago lived in the first third of the 20th century. Zhivago did not play a role in shaping the historical events depicted in the story. However, due to Pasternak's adherence to Tolstoy's philosophy that history cannot be voluntarily influenced, he unintentionally became the center of it.

Pasternak's personal experience sheds light on a key motif in this poem, namely the idea of a second birth. At the age of twelve, a fall from a horse marked a pivotal moment for the poet, which he later described as a revelation (August 6th) carrying a profound message about life's deeper meaning (Pasternak, 1957: 35). This event seems to echo in the poem, where the protagonist anticipates his death on the same date. Through this parallel, Pasternak explores the interconnectedness of life and death, suggesting their cyclical nature.

The lines from *Doctor Zhivago*, "Мне невероятно, до страсти хочется жить, а жизнь ведь значит всегда порываться вперед, к высшему, к совершенству и достигать его" (It's incredible, I want to live to the point of passion and to live means always to strive forward, to the highest, to perfection and achieve it), can be seen as a reflection of Pasternak's philosophy on life. On one hand, they convey a sense of urgency and passion, emphasizing the importance of living life to the fullest. The phrase "до страсти хочется жить" (I want to live to the point of passion) suggests a deep-seated desire to experience life intensely, without holding back.

On the other hand, the lines also express a sense of forward momentum, a constant striving for improvement and perfection. The phrase "а жизнь ведь значит всегда порываться вперед, к высшему, к совершенству и достигать его" (and to live means always to strive forward, to the highest, to perfection and achieve it) implies that life is a journey of continuous growth and self-improvement. This sentiment is echoed in Pasternak's letter to his sister in 1958, where he shares his thoughts on life.

In this context, Pasternak's view of life can be seen as a dynamic and aspirational one. He seems to believe that life is a constant process of movement and progression, where one should always strive to reach new heights and achieve perfection. This perspective is

closely tied to the idea of the nonstop passage of time, which is a recurring theme in his work. By embracing this forward momentum, Pasternak suggests that one can find meaning and purpose in life.

Furthermore, these lines can also be seen as a reflection of Pasternak's artistic philosophy. As a poet and writer, he was known for his innovative and avant-garde approach to language and form. His emphasis on striving for perfection and achieving it can be seen as a reflection of his creative process, where he constantly pushed the boundaries of what was possible in his art:

I've just recently been discharged from hospital.
This return to life is something tremendously
powerful. If I sit longer than an hour, my leg still
hurts. But life remains, as it always has been, a
magical combination of successes and plans...

(Slater, 2010: 394-395)

Another prominent element of Pasternak's late lyrics is the changing of seasons. Particularly, Pasternak wrote about the beginning of spring and equated it to the beginning of a new life. The symbolism of spring as life is prominent throughout the world, but more so in the Russian literary sphere. Nature's progression, such as budding plants, temperature increase, and animals coming out of hibernation signified spring's importance as a bearer of life and a transition to the future. Those correlate with the theme of life. The binary opposition of death to life, sleep to wake, and stagnation to movement is prevalent in Pasternak's late works. One evidence of this can be found in the poem «Март» "March" (1946) «Дело у весны кипит в руках "The spring is boiling in the hands," wherein the poet uses the same-root words related to life:

Но дымится жизнь в хлеву коровьем,
И здоровьем пышут зубья вил.

(Пастернак, 2017)

But life smokes in a cowshed,
And the teeth of the pitchfork radiate with
health.

(Pasternak, 2017)

Winter, on the other hand, is depicted as sick and weak. In Pasternak's eyes, winter is the antithesis of spring.

*Чахнет снег и болен малокровьем
В веточках бессильно синих жил.*

(Пастернак, 2017)

Snow is withering and sick with anemia
In twigs of powerlessly blue veins.

(Pasternak, 2017)

In contrast to his attitude to winter, Pasternak rather enjoyed summer because it was the time for farming and gardening. Those activities, for Pasternak, were not only mundane but also a form of therapy and stimulus for his creativity. Pasternak was a person who loved and thrived in mundanity. One of his poems in 1941, "Summer Day", was about his joy when farming (Barnes, 2004).

The Russian poet was not biased only to summer. Pasternak also invoked the simile between seasons and mundane items with vivid description in the poems «Осень» "Autumn" (1949) and «Земля» "Earth" (1947). Through realistic descriptions below:

*Врывается весна нахрапом.
Выпархивает моль за шкапом
И ползает по летним шляпам...*

(Пастернак, 2017)

Spring is kicking in.
The moth flies out behind the cupboard
And crawls on summer hats ...

(Pasternak, 2017)

Pasternak drew a comparison between the life that spring brought and its relation with human life. The deliberate choice of words showed Pasternak's particular love for life and nature. This love stemmed from his reverence for his father, the painter Leonid Pasternak. He wrote in one of his 1958 letters:

This attitude to life, this astonishment at how happy I am and what a gift my existence is – all this I have from my father. Reality and Nature enchanted him, and this was the guiding thread of his realism and his technical mastery of form.

(Slater, 2010: 397)

Another approach that Pasternak applied to his poems was life as a moment. In the poem «Тишина» "Silence" (1957), Pasternak paints a picture of a

peaceful forest not as a moving entity but as a static landscape:

*В лесу молчанье, тишина,
Как будто жизнь в глухой лощине
Не солнцем заворожена,
А по совсем другой причине.*

(Пастернак, 2017)

In the forest, silence, silence,
It's like life in a deep valley
Not enchanted by the sun
But for a completely different reason.

(Pasternak, 2017)

The picturesque description of the forest in the poem is shown like a photograph or painting. Pasternak captured the moment instead of describing it as an object over time. Thus, the reader sees the image as still, unmoved by time. There is no lyrical hero in the poem.

*Лосиха ест лесной подсед,
Хрустя обгладывает молодь.
Задевши за ее хребет,
Болтается на ветке желудь.*

(Пастернак, 2017)

Moose eats a forest seat
Crunchy gnaws on juveniles.
Grabbing her spine
An acorn dangles on a branch.

(Pasternak, 2017)

This poem is different from other poems in Pasternak's later collections. The concept of life in this poem is manifested through a single and timeless moment. It is a condensation of life between past, present, and future. The conceptualization of life as a picture works in this poem because it describes nature, which is seemingly still but actually consists of multiple small and unseen movements.

In contrast, the zenith of the manifestation of the phenomenon of life is the poem «Во всем мне хочется дойти» "In everything I want to reach" (1956). Pasternak's use of verbs in the third stanza speaks of a desire for constant movement. The movement motif encountered earlier is shown here

using five verbs as an example:

*Жить, думать, чувствовать, любить,
Свершать открытья.*

(Пастернак, 2017)

Live, think, feel, love,
Complete opening.

(Pasternak, 2017)

It has to be noticed that the verb «жить» “Live” occupies the first place in this poem. If this line is seen as a list of importance, it means that life is the utmost priority of the poet. Pasternak’s lyrical heroes in his late poems embody this value.

Pasternak’s frequent comparison of life to movement can be attributed to his own experiences. He often traversed between various locations, primarily between Moscow and Peredelkino, as well as other destinations. He was accustomed to moving throughout the country and admired the way people moved back and forth in large cities (Slater, 2010).

Movement, in both literal and metaphorical senses, became a dominant theme in Boris Pasternak’s later works. His personal affinity for movement and transformation is reflected across various subjects in his poetry. In his poems about urban life, Pasternak frequently portrayed people as perpetually in motion. Meanwhile, his nature poems depicted the ongoing transformations within the natural world as a form of “movement”. These shifting states served as metaphors for life’s ephemerality and restlessness.

Pasternak also conveyed these themes through his masterful use of imagery, which became a central poetic device for expressing abstract ideas in concrete visual terms. Imagery serves as a powerful tool for poets to build relationships between abstract themes and their tangible representations (Klarer, 2004). In Pasternak’s poetry, visuality plays a crucial role, as he weaves visual elements into his lyrical expression, often recontextualizing them to evoke deeper meanings. For instance, in one of his poems, Pasternak connects the natural transition between spring and winter with the human experience of sickness and snow. Also juxtaposing health with the sharpness of a pitchfork’s teeth. Through these visual and metaphorical connections, Pasternak brings abstract concepts like life’s fleeting nature and constant change into vivid, relatable imagery that enhances the emotional and intellectual impact

of his poetry.

The departure of winter and the welcoming of spring became a pairing that has a strong metaphorical significance. The dreary past is replaced by an optimistic future, the cold of winter is dissipated by the warmth of spring, and the rotten leaves pave the way for new buds. Pasternak, even in his life, often equated winter with loss, difficulties, and disappointment while spring was welcomed with joy and hope (Slater, 2010).

Pasternak’s depictions of nature often portrayed strong imagery and utilized strong parallels to emphasize his points. Hence his status as one of the most celebrated naturalist poets of his time. Pasternak often wrote his late poems with words and expressions pertaining to nature (more on this later) and its connection to humanity (Wachtel, 2004). Pasternak’s profound connection to nature was established due to his long stay at his *dacha* (a seasonal second home, commonly found in Russian exurbs) at Peredelkino. As he wrote in his letter to his sister, Lidya Pasternak Slater, “but I spend the whole year at the *dacha*; Zina has transformed it into a winter house with steam heating and every comfort” (Slater, 2010: 383). Particularly, nature became the main motif of his later poems.

Even in his early poem, «Определение поэзии» “Definition of Poetry” (1917), we can see how Pasternak perceived poetry as a set of surreal imageries yet still deeply intertwined with the mundane world:

*Это – круто налившийся свист
Это – щелканье сдавленных льдинок
Это – ночь, леденящая лист,
Это – двух соловьев поединок.*

*Это – сладкий заглохший горох,
Это – слезы вселенной в лопатках,
Это – с пультов и флейт – Фигаро
Низвергается градом на грядку.*

(Пастернак, 2017)

It’s a whistle, acutely full,
It’s a crackle of squeezed ice,
It’s night, freezing a leaf,
It’s two nightingales in a duel
It’s the sweet grown-wildness of peas,
It’s tears of the universe in pods,

It's Figaro hurtling like hail
From flutes and scores onto soil.

(Pasternak, 2017)

Even since his early stanzas, Pasternak attempted to define poetry with the beauty of nature; the harmony of sound produced by the mundane world visualized into concepts (Livingstone, 2015). Pasternak, since he was a young man, had pondered about nature and life, and this sense of awe led him throughout his journey as a poet even until his later years. In one of his earlier letters in 1924, he wrote:

There are things in one's life – even perhaps just a casual word – whose incomprehensible warmth and freshness – above anything else that you can see or hear around you at the time – makes them seem like the very voice of life or truth . . .

(Slater, 2010: 15)

The prevalence of imagery is also shown by the poem below, in which Pasternak puts his attention to details by using specific words and comparisons, like equating the sun ray's stripe with the color «шафрановую» “saffron” and «охрою» “ochre”:

*Проникло солнце утром рано
Косою полосой шафрановою
От занавеси до дивана.
Оно покрыло жаркой охрою
Соседний лес, дома поселка,
Мою постель, подушку мокрую,
И край стены за книжной полкой.*

(Пастернак, 2017)

The sun came up early in the morning
With an oblique stripe of saffron
From curtains to sofas.
It covered with hot ochre
Neighboring forest, village houses,
My bed, my pillow is wet,
And the edge of the wall behind the bookshelf.

(Pasternak, 2017)

Another quality prevalent in Pasternak's poems was their deep relation to the concept of epistemology, courtesy of Pasternak's tutelage by Herman Cohen.

Pasternak tended to strip mundane objects bare of their “function” and “forms”, instead bringing their “quality” into the forefront of his poems. Something that humans qualify as mundane, for Pasternak was not such, as he was aware of the fallibility of human knowledge and moved away past it. His poems were also considered an innovation in his time, as they concealed Pasternak's lyrical self behind multiple sensory phenomena. In his poems, the outside world, perceived through his lyrical self's sensory functions, was melded with the lyrical self's consciousness (Han, 2015).

For example, the poem «Июль» “July” (1956) used mundane words such as «житьё», «жилой», «жилец» “living”, “residential”, and “tenant”. This poem personified “summer” as a visitor, someone who came to enjoy vacation:

*Да это наш жилец приезжий,
Наш летний дачник-отпускник.*

(Пастернак, 2017)

Yes, this is our guest, a visitor,
Our summer vacationer.

(Pasternak, 2017)

Common objects, specifically «кровати» “bed”, «кровать» “tablecloth”, and «занавеской» “curtain” are emphasized to convey a sense of mundanity.

*В халате крадется к кровати,
Срывает скатерть со стола.
Ног у порога не обтерши,
Вбегает в вихре сквозняка
И с занавеской, как с танцоршей,
Взвивается до потолка.*

(Пастернак, 2017)

In a dressing gown sneaks to the bed,
He rips the tablecloth off the table.
Do not wipe your feet at the threshold,
Runs in a whirlwind of draft
And with a curtain, as with a dancer,
Soars up to the ceiling.

(Pasternak, 2017)

The concept of the ephemerality of life and mundanity through epistemological understanding culminated in several of his poems, such as «Июль»

“July” and “Earth «Земля»”. Both poems contained a hint of everyday fabulousness («Кто этот баловник-невежа/ И этот призрак и двойник?») (Who is this ignorant prankster / And this ghost and double?), In Zhivago’s poem “Autumn”, life is shown from the side of mundane «житья» “life”. In «Осени» “Autumn” (1949) «Житьё тошней недуга» “Living as sick as sickness”, and in the poem «Земля» “Earth” (1947), the words «воля» “will” and «жилой уют» “residential comfort” are compared in the perception of the poet. The following lines of the quatrain confirm the juxtaposition:

*На воле и в жилом уюте,
И всюду воздух сам не свой.
И тех же верб сквозные прутья.
И тех же белых почек вздутья
И на окне, и на распутье,
На улице и в мастерской..*

(Пастернак, 2017)

At will and in residential comfort,
And everywhere the air itself is not its own.
And the same willows through the rods.
And the same white kidney swelling
And at the window, and at the crossroads,
On the street and in the workshop...

(Pasternak, 2017)

For Pasternak, the concept of will transcends mere residential comfort, despite the poet’s tendency to generalize these ideas within this context. The common objects can also be traced in the poem «Музыка» “Music” (1956): Дом высился, как каланча.

*По тесной лестнице угольной
Несли рояль два силача...*

(Пастернак, 2017)

On a narrow coal staircase
Two strongmen carried the piano...

(Pasternak, 2017)

In this poem, as in «Июле» “July”, the word lodger is given a touch of everyday life. Both animated July and the lyrical hero of the last poem are fleetingly snatched from the crowd and accidentally fall into the

chronotope of Pasternak’s work.

Cohen was not the only mentor who had a significant presence in Pasternak’s life. He was undoubtedly linked with the art circle since his youth. Leonid Pasternak, his father, was an artist, while his mother was a famous pianist. Furthermore, the Pasternak family often received visits from Valentin Serov and Mikhail Vrubel (both modernist Russian painters); composer and conductor Sergey Rachmaninov; and the great writer Leo Tolstoy, whom the Pasternak family considered a family friend. However, the virtuoso pianist Alexander Skryabin was Pasternak’s most influential mentor in terms of artistry. Skryabin played a major part in the development of Pasternak’s poems, for Pasternak’s poems were rich in lyricism and melodic alliteration and assonance which are undoubtedly linked with music. Due to his closeness with Skryabin, it was unsurprising that Pasternak poured his love of nature into the art of poetry.

For example, the apartment tenant in the poem «Музыка» “Music” is an intermediary between the two worlds, the everyday world and the world of art. The tenant moves the scene from the human world to the fantasy world of music:

*Вернувшись внутрь, он заиграл
Не чью-нибудь чужую пьесу,
Но собственную мысль, хорал,
Гуденье мессы, шелест леса.*

(Пастернак, 2017)

Back inside he played
Not someone else’s play
But my own thought, chorale,
The buzz of mass, the rustle of the forest.

(Pasternak, 2017)

The lines above also show that Pasternak tended to juxtapose the mundane and the fantastic. Pasternak could perceive the mundane world through the metaphysical lens, and vice versa. Elements of reality, fantasy, history, and inner human workings were synthesized to form his avant-garde brand of poetry (Zhukova, 2020). Such viewpoint and style of writing were possible largely due to Pasternak’s deep connection to Skryabin and Cohen as his mentors of music and philosophy, respectively.

Pasternak’s rich usage of metaphor and

profound knowledge and fluency of the Russian language increased the depth of his art, as shown in one of, allegedly, his most influential poem, «Быть знаменитым некрасиво» “Being famous is ugly” (1956).

*И должен ни единой долькой
Не отступаться от лица,
Но быть живым, живым и только,
Живым и только до конца.*

(Пастернак, 2017)

And owe not a single slice
Don't back away from your face
But to be alive, alive and only,
Alive and only until the end.

(Pasternak, 2017)

In the poem, Pasternak used «жизнь» “life” and its cognate seven times in repetition to underline his appreciation for life. Curiously, the word «живым» “alive” was repeated three times. Three, in many cultures, is considered a sacred number. This repetition was intended to evoke the correlation between the past, present, and future. The word «живым» “alive” ascended into a sacred status due to it being repeated three times, hence showing another example of Pasternak's reverence for life.

Another particular element of Pasternak's late poems was Pasternak's connection to religion and the allusion to Christian religious texts. During the post-World War II era, Pasternak became increasingly involved in religious readings, as observed by several close friends of his, particularly Zinaida, his wife, who mentioned that Pasternak admired the Bible for its high moral content and poetic quality. He also attended church at that time, often sporadically, as some of his friends also spoke that although Pasternak read the Bible and appreciated the Psalms, he was never deeply religious, more likely seeing the holy books as a form of inspiration for his spirituality rather than a doctrine for complete adherence (Barnes, 2004). Therefore, the theme of spirituality showed itself often in many of Pasternak's late works. The theme usually comes unexpectedly without any internal reference. Pasternak might believe that this is a universal and simple theme, therefore he trusted the reader to understand the reference immediately.

*Шли по лесу вы друг за дружкой.
Вы шли толпою, врозь и парами,
Вдруг кто-то вспомнил, что сегодня
Шестое августа по старому,
Преображение Господне.*

(Пастернак, 2017)

You walked through the forest with each other.
You walked in a crowd, apart and in pairs,
Suddenly someone remembered that today
sixth of august old
Transfiguration Lord's.

(Pasternak, 2017)

The biblical motifs employed by the poet in this poem possess a unique “cohesive force” that unifies his creative world, enabling the representation of life in all its diversity.

Concerning religious motifs, Pasternak equated his fascination with life to God's act of creation and divine miracles. Pasternak wrote about creativity as a divine act, such as in the composition of these last quatrains, where the motive of creativity is seen as a transition to another world:

*Прощай, размах крыла расправленный,
Полета вольное упорство,
И образ мира, в слове явленный,
И творчество, и чудотворство*

(Пастернак, 2017)

Farewell, spread wingspan,
Flight of free perseverance,
And the image of the world, revealed in the
word,
Both creativity and wonderworking

(Pasternak, 2017)

According to Pasternak, in creativity a person surpasses himself, therefore art is greater than a person, and it is stronger than him. In addition, a significant metaphor about space and air is connected with the «вольным упорством» “free persistence” with which the lyrical hero says goodbye in the last stanza. The reference to this concept reflects the poet's engagement with Kant's notion of «сравнение с голубем в безвоздушном пространстве» “comparison with a dove in an airless space” and, by

extension, Plato's analogy that likens the movement of ideas to the flight of a flock of pigeons (Barnes, 2004: 57).

In the poem «Когда разгуляется» "When It Clears Up" (1956), the religious motifs were numerous and abundant. The greenery of the leaves shines through «как живопись в цветном стекле» "like a painting in colored glass", the windows are covered with church paintings, and inside the cathedral, there is such a filling with light and space that the «отголосок хора» "echo of the choir" is heard by the lyrical hero.

In addition, in the work, creativity is given the meaning of «Бога-создателя», "God the Creator", «Бога-творца» "Creator God", whose voice can be heard by the lyrical hero «Далекий отголосок хора/ Мне слышать иногда дано» (The distant echo of the choir/Sometimes it is given to me to hear). Life manifests itself both in its everyday manifestation and connected with creation and creativity:

Как будто внутренность собора
Простор земли, и чрез окно
Далекий отголосок хора
Мне слышать иногда дано.

(Пастернак, 2017)

Like the inside of a cathedral
Expanse of land, and through the window
Distant echo of the choir
I hear sometimes given.

(Pasternak, 2017)

Pasternak's later lyrics illustrate a profound intertwining of life and creativity. In his perspective, the very manifestation of life represents an act of creativity, akin to the "creation" as an act of God. Once again, the religious overtone was shown as a result of Pasternak getting more interested in religion as a subject matter.

CONCLUSION

Boris Pasternak was a greatly influential Soviet writer. In contrast to his fellow writers, Pasternak did not blindly adhere to the prevalent ideology at the time. Instead, he derived his literary works from the people around him and his experience with them;

his appreciation of life stemmed from the deaths of the people around him; his reverence of nature came from his fascination with Peredelkino; his adoration of movement was derived from his frequent movement between Moscow and Peredelkino and by seeing the busy urban life; his penchant for art was inherited from Skryabin and his inquisitive mind from Cohen; and his interest in religious motifs originated from the latest part of his life, which was filled with reading Christian texts and attending religious activities. In conclusion, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of Boris Pasternak as a writer whose works reflect his life story presented poetically. This clarifies the quality and value of his masterpieces and shows that understanding one's life story increases the gaining of the artistic value of Pasternak's poetry.

STATEMENTS OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors herewith declare that this article is totally free from any conflict of interest regarding the data collection, analysis, and the editorial process, and the publication process in general.

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